

IRS News Release

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IRS Works With Associations to Help Hurricane-Affected Taxpayers

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service announced today an agreement with two tax professional associations to assist taxpayers impacted by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma.

Volunteers at IRS' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sites are now able to refer hurricane-affected taxpayers needing help with relatively complex tax issues to participating members of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) or the American Association of Attorney-Certified Public Accountants (AAA-CPA) for free return preparation assistance.

VITA and TCE volunteers are generally not trained to compute Casualty Loss deductions or to complete amended returns for prior years. The volunteers can now refer low to moderate-income (\$38,000 or less) taxpayers needing such assistance to the AICPA or AAA-CPA for free assistance. Previously, these and other tax professional associations provided such free assistance through official FEMA and other Disaster Recovery Centers. A number of tax professional organizations continue to provide such assistance through these sites.

Assistance from participating CPAs may be via telephone, mail, e-mail or in some cases, face-to-face.

Taxpayers wishing to take advantage of this free assistance need to first visit a VITA or TCE site. Convenient locations in communities across the country can be found by calling the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 or by calling AARP (the nation's largest TCE sponsor) at 1-888-AARP NOW (1-888-227-7669).

"We are happy to partner with tax professional associations like the AICPA and AAA-CPA to help deliver the assistance these taxpayers need," said IRS Director Customer Assistance, Relationships and Education Mark Pursley. "This tax assistance can truly make a difference in people's lives."

"Our members recognize that hurricane victims face many challenges. We hope that this service will help by giving the victims one less thing to worry about," said Barry Melancon, AICPA President and CEO. "We are glad that our partnership with the IRS has been expanded to include a service that many CPAs see as a way to give back to their communities."

“No matter where you live, technology gives CPAs across the nation the opportunity to volunteer right from our own desk,” said Charles R. Kowal, Partner and Director, Personal Financial Services, Ernst & Young LLP, one of the largest participants in the AICPA initiative. “Technology has made those in the Gulf Region our virtual neighbors, and it’s time to give our neighbors a helping hand.”

Additional information regarding disaster tax relief may be found on the IRS’s Web site at IRS.gov.